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PAGE 01  
ACTION NEA-22

KABUL 02314 270724Z

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 04PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-11 ACDA-12 SAA-01 IO-14 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /105 W  
-----086603 270730Z /15

P R 270441Z MAR 79  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2976  
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
CINCPAC  
CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L K A B U L 2314

E.O. 12065: GDS 3-26-85 (TAYLOR, JAMES E.) OR-P  
TAGS: PINR, PINS, PINT, AF  
SUBJ: (C) LEVEL OF FIGHTING IN HERAT WAS OR IS HIGH

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. AN AFGHAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO WAS IN HERAT DURING THE UNREST, AND WHO HAS JUST RETURNED TO KABUL, HAS COMMENTED PRIVATELY THAT, AS OF MARCH 21 (THE DAY HE LEFT HERAT) THE CITY WAS IN THE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF ANTI-REGIME FORCES. THE OFFICIAL ADDED THAT ABOUT 14,000 PEOPLE (INCLUDING MANY SOLDIERS) HAD BEEN KILLED SO FAR DURING THE FIGHTING. A HAZARA NAMED BARAT ALI (ANOTHER VERSION OF THIS NAME WE HAVE HEARD OF MOLAVI AHMAD ALI) IS REPORTEDLY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION FORCES IN HERAT.

3. COMMENT: CURRENT REPORTING INDICATES THAT HERAT IS UNDER  
GOVERNMENT CONTROL. WE HAVE NO WAY TO CONFIRM THE CASUALTY FIGURE  
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PAGE 02 KABL 02314 270724Z

CITED, BUT EVEN IF REMOTELY ACCURATE, IT GIVES AN INDICATION

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OF THE LEVEL OF FIGHTING IN HERAT, AND COULD WELLS SHAKE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE REGIME'S RANK AND FILE SUPPORTERS. ONCE IT BEGINS MAKING THE ROUNDS OF THE DRA BUREAUCRACY. IF AN ETHNIC HAZARA (MOST OF WHOM ARE SHIAS) IS, IN FACT, PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE IN THIS EPISODE, IT COULD INDICATE THAT AS AT DARA-I-SUF'S RECENT FIGHTING, THIS MAJOR ETHNIC MINORITY IS TAKING THE FIELD AGAINST THE KHALQIS, A POTENTIALLY OMINOUS DEVELOPMENT FOR DOMESTIC SECURITY. THE HERAT FIGHTING HAS ALSO INVOLVED ANTI-KHALQI ELEMENTS FROM THE SEVERAL ISLAND COMMUNITIES OF PUSHTUNS AROUND THAT CITY. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THE TOP KHALQI LEADERSHIP IS PUSHTUN, THAT DOMINANT ETHNIC MAJORITY CONTINUES TO REMAIN IN THE FOREFRONT OF ARMED OPPOSITION TO THE REGIME. AMSTUTZ

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